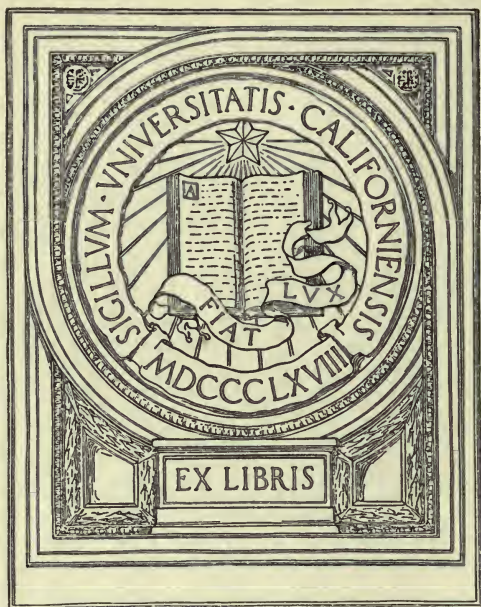


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THE SOD HOUSE IN HEAVEN,

AND OTHER POEMS.



By HARRY E. MILLS.

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TOPEKA, KANSAS:
GEO. W. CRANE & COMPANY.
1892.

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DEDICATORY.

TO MY

FATHER AND MOTHER,

WHOSE WISDOM IN THE GUIDANCE OF THEIR CHILDREN
HAS BEEN EQUALED ONLY BY THEIR WILLING
SELF-SACRIFICES FOR THEM,

THIS VOLUME IS

WITH GRATEFUL AFFECTION DEDICATED.

921841



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EXPLANATION.

It is customary to preface a volume like this with the statement that its contents are published at the earnest solicitation of many friends.

However true this might be of the present work, the author will say nothing about the matter, but will frankly acknowledge that the incentives which have led to the production of many a similar volume have probably influenced him.

Neither will he give any hint as to how great or otherwise are his expectations. He believes that every writer in the long run is treated justly by the reading public, and he hopes for his book only that measure of favor which it really merits.

H. E. M.

WASHBURN COLLEGE,

TOPEKA, KANSAS, December, 1892.

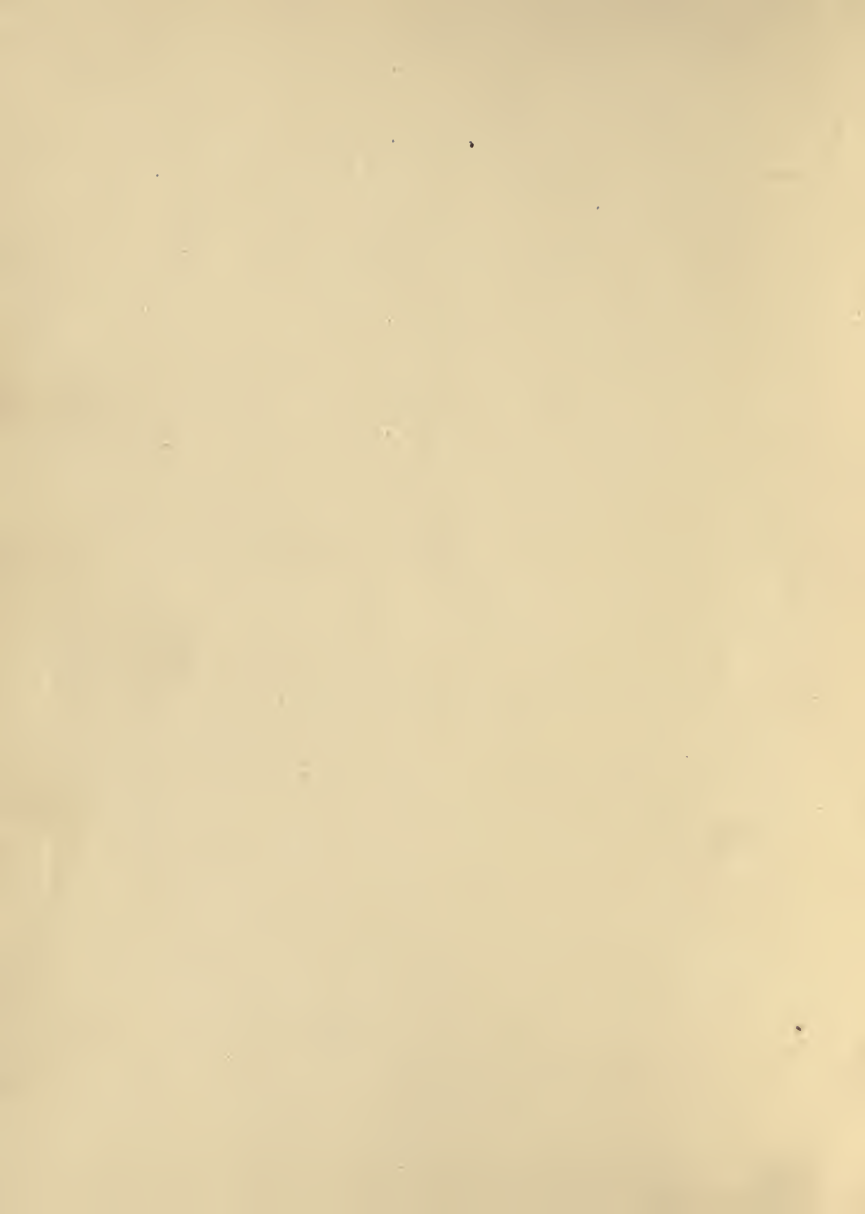
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DIALECT POEMS.



THE SOD HOUSE IN HEAVEN.

Well, yes, it 's sometimes pretty lonesome here,
Particularly 'bout this time of year,
 When harvestin' is done,
 An' hayin' hez begun,
An' early corn is hard'nin' in the ear.

You 'd like to hev me tell you 'bout my past,
An' why I 'm sick an' all alone at last ?
 Why, yes, I 'd kind of like
 To tell you 'bout it, Ike,
Since you 've been kind enough to stop an' ast.

It 's twenty year since me an' Liza came
An' settled down here on this timber claim.
 The land was wild an' new,
 An' neighbors mighty few,
An' all around here there was lots o' game.

I do n't believe there ever was a king
That felt ez big ez I did 'long the spring
That this sod house was done,
An' Liza hed begun
To fix it up with things she 'd thought to bring.

O' course we made a pretty modest start,
Fer wealth an' us was mighty fur apart.
But still we did n't mind
Ef we was some behind
The latest styles, fer we was rich at heart.

There 's allers lots o' work when you begin
To make a farm where grass hez allers been.
But everything looked bright
With sort o' rainbow light ;
So I pulled off my coat an' waded in.

One day a chap, that could n't spell ner add,
Come round to see what sort o' board we had.
We see he 'd come to stay,
An' would n't go away,
Fer Liza was his ma and me his dad.

I never see so peert a chap ez him,
An' full o' mischief clean up to the brim ;
 An' allers in fer fun,
 ' Fore he could walk er run ;
An' so we called him Little Frisky Jim.

An' when his mother made him his first pants,
You ort to seen that little feller prance.
 I half believed the child
 Was really goin' wild
The way he 'd run around an' jump an' dance.

One day the wind got on a sort o' swirl,
An' fetched around to us a baby girl.
 She hed a pretty smile
 Staid with her all the while ;
An' so we called her Little Laughing Pearl.

An' them two little ones, so pure an' bright,
They filled this old sod house plum full o' light.
 I made 'em lots o' toys
 An' helped 'em with their noise,
An' used to like to watch 'em sleep at night.

An' Liza, every special pleasant day,
Would send 'em out around the place to play.

I allers liked to see

'Em come to bother me

An' ast me things, an' git round in the way.

On rainy days when they was kep' inside,
'Fore any other sort o' game was tried,
They 'd say, "Please, daddy, please
Git on your hands an' knees."
An' so I 'd be a hoss fer them to ride.

An' that 's the way things went about five year ;
We hed a little branch o' Heaven here ;
It want no gold-paved floor
Nor pearly gate fer door
That made it so ; but it was love and cheer.

I somehow kind o' thought 'twould allers be
The same sunshiny place fer them an' me ;
Till, sudden like one day,
Jim run away to play
Up yonder, jest beyond where we could see.

Poor little Pearl! she was n't yit quite four,
An' still she grieved fer Jim ez much er more
 Than Liza did, er me;
 An' it was hard to see
Her lonesome like a-playin' round the door.

An' by an' by, one still an' starry night,
Her little face seemed more than common bright;
 An' ez she quiet lay,
 " Oh, Jim!" we heard her say,
An' then she went forever from our sight.

An' there was Liza now an' me, heart-sore,
Jest left again the way we was before
 The little ones hed come
 To share our sod-house home,
Exceptin' that we loved each other more.

It seemed to me thet Liza was my share
Ef part o' them I loved I hed to spare;
 But jest fer Pearl an' Jim
 God called her up to him;
An' maybe she was needed over there.

But after she was gone I could n't see
Ez it was much odds how things went with me ;
 An' so, year after year,
 I 've jest been stayin' here,
Half-way betwixt what 's been an' what 's to be.

An' ever since the first o' this sick spell
I 've half been hopin' that I 'd not git well.
 I do n't keer much to stay,
 With them all gone away ;
The place is lonesomer than I can tell.

Yes, thank you, Ike ; I b'lieve I 'd like a drink ;
I aint no worse, jest kind o' weak, I think.
 How bright 'tis everywhere !
 What soft, warm, dreamy air ;
An' great big flowers, red an' white an' pink.

Jest listen, Ike, I hear 'em sing somewhere !
An' there 's a shinin' river over there,
 An' near the glitterin' sands
 A great big city stands,
An' there 's a flock of angels in the air.

Outside the place a piece, yit middlin' nigh,
I see a little sod house 'bout ez high
 Ez this, but lots more trim;
 There 's Liza, Pearl an' Jim
A-beck'nin' me to come. Dear Ike, good-bye.

THE HAYFIELD FAMILY.

[The Hayfields moved to Kansas in early days, and settled on a claim near the center of the State. Here Mr. Hayfield built a two-roomed sod house, and here the family have passed many days of industrious content. Early and late they have wrestled with the rich soil until they have compelled it to yield them a very fair competence. Mr. Hayfield loves his homestead, enjoys his unpretentious dwelling, and does not care to be Governor. Mrs. Hayfield is equally content with their simple lot, her greatest pride being in her gilt-edged butter, which has been praised and premiumed at every county fair for years. Simple, old-fashioned piety regulates the household, and frugality is its watchword. The family is a numerous one, blessed with perfect health and a good degree of everyday intelligence. Its prime characteristic is thrift.]

HEZEKIAH HAYFIELD, SR.

[One spring, just before time to plow for corn, Mr. Hayfield went over into an adjoining county to visit a brother-in-law. He and his host had a lively discussion as to the relative desirableness of city and country life. The brother-in-law said that as soon as possible he should sell his farm and move to town. Mr. Hayfield delivered himself as follows:]

My neighbors, Peter Tompkins an' Ebenezer Brown,
Hev sold their farms an' fixin's, an' are movin' off to town.

They 're gittin' tired o' farmin', an' they want to rest, I
guess;

I'll bet you they git sick o' town in thirty days er less.

Ef they can stan' it, I can, but I swan it's hard to see
How they can live, shut up in town the way they'll hev
to be.

There's houses on both sides of 'em, an' neighbors all
around;

Can't hardly raise no garden truck, they'll hev so little
ground;

Can't keep no pigs ner chickens er their neighbors'll com-
plain;

Won't hev no eggs to sell, ner cheese er butter, stock er
grain.

They'll hev to git some office, er fall back on Providence,
An' do a sight o' mowin' in their meader of expense.

It's allers been a puzzle what so many town folks do,
To make a livin'; yit somehow they seem to worry through.

But there 's nothin' like the country ef it 's comfort thet
you want,
Where the prairie chickens muster an' the rabbits hev their
haunt.

Where the larks is up an' singin' in the mornin' 'fore it 's
light,
An' the katydid is drummin' at their orchestra all night.

An' the choir at the fish-pond run a sort o' music race,
With whatever else is singin', bringin' in their bull-frog
bass.

An' the moonlight 's sort o' mellow, an' the evenin' wind is
soft,
An' the barn is full o' perfume from the new hay in the
loft.

An' the apples in the orchard throwin' kisses at the sun,
Git to blushin' an' explainin' thet they meant it all in fun.

An' the watermelons chuckle, an' the yeller pumpkins grin,
An' the sweet potatoes giggle while the hollyhocks chime
in.

An' the turkeys strut an' gobble, an' the guineas run an'
screech ;
An' the roosters pitch their crowin' jest ez high ez they
can reach.

An' you see the hogs a-fat'nin', an' the cattle lookin' sleek ;
An' the geese a-growin' feathers ez they waddle up the
creek.

An' the prairie dogs a-barkin' ez they lay round in the sun ;
An' a blue streak 'cross the meader — some jack-rabbit on
the run.

An' you live on home-made cookin' ; hev old-fashioned
buttermilk,
Succotash an' apple dumplin', roastin' ears jest in the silk.

Pancakes wallerin' in molasses with an awful temptin' look ;
Ham an' eggs an' baked potaters like yer mother used to
cook.

Oh, there 's nothin' like the country, an' the health the
meaders give,
An' there 's nothin' like a sod house ef you really want to
live.

An' there 's nothin' like the prairies, where the air is pure
an' free,
One good Kansas quarter-section — them is jest the stuff
fer me !

HEZEKIAH HAYFIELD, JR.

[Young Hayfield is twenty years of age — an intelligent lad, in whom ambition and awkwardness are evenly balanced. He has always been kept on very familiar terms with the plow, but has twice attended the State Fair at Topeka, and has become infatuated with what he has seen of city life. He takes issue with his father in the following language :]

They say thet the farmer is king of the soil,
An' lives like a lord on the fruit of his toil ;

Has nothin' to worry him, nothin' to fear,
But jest keeps a-prosperin' year after year.

He has fer his partners the wind an' the rain,
The sun scatters gold on his acres of grain,

An' keeps 'em a-growin' while he is asleep,
An' loads 'em with wealth when they're ready to reap ;

That the farmer is only jest playin' at work,
Not half so hard pressed ez the merchant er clerk.

This sounds awful nice ; but I jest want to say
Thet when yer a-farmin' it do n't work that way.

There's lots o' things worse than the farm, seems to me ;
But yit it aint half what it's cracked up to be.

There's drought an' there's chinch-bugs, there's
floods an' there's rust ;
There's grasshoppers hatchin' right out o' the dust.

Yer sheep are a picnic fer coyotes an' dogs,
An' cholera claims half yer chickens an' hogs.

Yer windmills an' fences hev lots o' mean tricks,
An' lay awake nights jest to git out o' fix.

An' you are forever a-tinkerin' away
At things thet don't bring you a nickel o' pay.

There 's lots o' hard sweatin' fer all thet you git,
An' sometimes you sweat without gittin' a bit.

These folks that think farmers are on the top shelves,
The most of 'em never tried farmin' themselves.

In thinkin' the country lots nicer than town,
They hev my opinions jest turned upside down.

In town you aint tied with yer stock an' yer grain,
You never hev hay lyin' out in the rain.

You sit in yer office er stand in yer store,
Jest watchin' the money roll in at the door.

They fetch you yer mail an' bring 'round what you buy,
They sprinkle the streets when the dust tries to fly;

An' if yer front yard gits to pantin' fer rain
You open the gear to a big water-main.

There 's somethin' to go to about every night ;
There 's sidewalks an' pavements an' plenty o' light.

There 's street cars, an' parks, an' its handy to stores ;
They allers hev screens to their windows an' doors.

An' ef you aint nothin' to do fer awhile
But talk to somebody off two or three mile,

You jest turn a crank thet is hitched to a bell,
An' ring up the feller an' 'phone him a spell.

Last week they was tellin' at old Peter Jones
Thet they can see folks through them there telephones ;

An' somebody said thet they think pretty soon
They 'll talk with the man thet is runnin' the moon.

Now, out in the country you do n't see such things ;
You jest hear about 'em, an' wish you hed wings.

But people in town always hev 'em close by,
An' life is a sort of a Fourth o' July.

An' I hev concluded, from all I can see,
That life in the city is jest right fer me.

EZRA LONG'S SERENADE.

[Ezra Long is Mr. Hayfield's hired man. He is a promising youth, in his own peculiar way, and possesses the faculty of not being able to take a hint—a quality which is distantly related to perseverance. He has already recognized in himself a fine singer, though he has not yet been able to convince anyone else of his discovery. He tells his own story, which is as follows:]

You 're a-wonderin' what 's the matter with my eye on
the off side?

Well, I 'll tell you, if you 'll keep it mighty still ;
You see there came a family from the city to reside
In that summer house near oun on the hill.

The people hed the money, and a lot o' city airs,
An' an awful pretty girl about sixteen ;
An' I see her out one mornin' readin' on the porch up-
stairs,
When I drove a lot o' calves away to wean.

Aint no idee what ailed me, but ez quick ez I see her
My senses 'peared to be took off their feet ;
I stopped an' stood a-gazin', fer I could n't seem to stir ;
She looked so sort o' heavenly an' sweet.

I vowed I 'd git acquainted with this angel-beatin' miss,
An' so I writ some verses fer a song,
An' thought I 'd sing 'em to her ; I was sure that after
this
She 'd say, " Come in and see us, Mr. Long."

I knew that city fellers when they go to serenade
Hev playin' on a harp er violin ;
I 'd allers made my music with a hoe er rake er spade,
But I could drum on somethin' made o' tin.

I almost knew Old Hundred, jest from hearin' Liza Ann,
An' though the words an' music would n't fit,
I played awhile 'fore singin' on the Hayfields' old dish-
pan,
Then into this sweet serenade I lit :

[To be sung to the tune of Old Hundred.]

“Betsy Ann, divinest Betsy,
Now the sun has gone to bed,
An' I 've milked old Roan and Brindle,
An' the ball-faced calf is fed.

“An' I 've give the hogs their supper,
Fed the pup and watched him smile,
An' fer fear you might be lonesome,
I hev come to sing awhile.

“Betsy dear, I 've been a-thinkin'
Ef you 'd hitch yourself with me,
We could haul life 's lumber wagon,
Jest ez slick ez slick could be.”

Here I let up on the singin' but went on a-drummin'
still,

Jest to give 'em what they call an interloud ;

It commenced a-rainin' stovewood, bricks an' bootjacks,
fit to kill,

Like cannon-balls a-hailin' from a cloud.

But I aint a bit discouraged, an' ez soon ez I can walk,

An' see a little more with this off eye,

I 'm goin' to go an' see that girl an' hev a right good
talk,

An' tell her what I hope fer by an' by.

O' course she may upset me, but I hardly think she will,

When she has really heard me sing a song ;

But if she tries to bounce me I will jest freeze to her
still,

Until I change her name to Mrs. Long.

MR. HAYFIELD'S FAVORITE MUSIC.

When I was to Chicago
I thought I'd jest drop in
An' hear that Remininy
Saw on his violin.

He must 'a' made fine music,
Fer they would cheer' an cheer,
But there is other playin'
That better fits my ear.

I'd rather lie an' listen,
Some sunny summer day,
To miles o' mower music
Thet floods the fields o' hay.

To hear the windmill playing
Old Hundred on the pump;
The hayrake's "hallelujah!"
That comes with every dump.

There ain't no grand pianner,
Thet I hev ever seen,
Can make such strains o' sweetness
Ez my old thresh machine.

I like to hear the grindstone
A-tunin' up the scythe
To play fer blackbird choirs
Thet sing so gay an' blithe.

I'm allers in fer music,
I hanker fer its charm ;
But not that city janglin'.
I want mine off the farm.

PRAIRIE CRADLE-SONG.

[It is evening. Within the Hayfield home they are enacting the closing scenes of the day. Supper is over, and Amandy Hayfield is putting the dishes to order. By the table sits Mr. Hayfield, absorbed in the last number of *The Alliance Boomerang*, while Hezekiah Hayfield, jr., is stretched before the fire toasting himself into drowsiness. At the fur-

ther end of the room Mrs. Hayfield is lulling to sleep little Jerry Simpson Hayfield, so named because he has always raised a doleful protest against the extravagant and barbarous custom of wearing hose. The home-made cradle plays a soothing accompaniment as the mother croons the following:]

Hush thee, my baby, the daylight is dying,
Night wings her course toward the lessening west,
Over the prairie the zephyrs are sighing,
Slumberland welcomes the weary to rest.

CHORUS:

Sleep, sleep, the angels keep
Their vigils above thy head,
For Whip-poor-will himself is still,
And Bunny has gone to bed.

Rude tho' the crib that received thee, a stranger,
Humble the home that rejoiced at thy birth,
Lowlier yet was the Bethlehem manger
Where first reposed the Redeemer of earth.

Chorus.

Sweet be the dreams that the messengers wing thee,
Fresh from the throne in the palace of God.
Joy they have brought us in deigning to bring thee
Heavenly joy to a cottage of sod.

Chorus.

TWICET EZ TIGHT.

What made me marry Susie? Why, 'twas cause I loved
her so.

What made me love her? I'll declare I aint right sure I
know,

Except that she had allers been so good an' kind to me,
I sort o' had to fall in love to even up, you see.

I went to workin' fer her dad when I was just eighteen,
The awkwardest young country Jake that you have ever
seen.

She must 'a' felt like laughin' when I spilt my cup o' tea,
An' dumped the gravy in my lap, an' launched some bread
at sea.

Down in the water pitcher; but she acted awful kind,
An' helped me straighten up the mess an' told me not to
mind.

An' next day when I stopped her horse that tried to run
away,
She thanked me till I wished he 'd run a dozen times a day.

An' she an' me was always pretty friendly after that ;
Till sittin' by the spring one night where we had often sat,
I stole a kiss real quiet ez our talk was gittin' slack,
Then felt so bad about it that I had to give it back.

Well, next thing we was married an' was on a rented
farm,
An' I 'd a swore 'twas fairy land ef 'twas n't that my arm
Would git to feelin' tired jest the way it used to do
Along toward sunset just before some hard day's work
was through.

An' then she'd cheer me up, you know, till it would
almost scém
Ez ef I must be livin' in the palace of a dream.
But one by one the racin' years hev chased each other by,
While trouble an' mistakes hev sometimes clouded up the
sky.

But Susie 's allers been the same no matter what hez come,
An' when it's been most dark outside it's been most
bright at home.

An' since she 's allers been so good an' kind in every way,
I guess I've fell in love with her a little more each day.

They tied the knot that binds us fifty year ago to-night;
So, Parson, tie it over, only make it twicet ez tight.

PUNKIN PIE.

Say, Billy, when yer fixin' fer to fish er take a ride,
An' know yer goin' to git to feelin' holler like inside,
An' see yer mother puttin' up a lunch fer by-an-by,
Why is it nothin' strikes you like the piece o' punkin pie?

An' while yer busy waitin' fer the fish to come an' bite,
An' wonderin' why the skeeters can't let up till after night,
What makes the bugs an' crickets an' the birds an' squir-
rels try
To chirp an' sing an' chatter all the time 'bout punkin pie?

An' when it comes to eatin' ef you do the way you ort,
An' tackle bread an' butter first an' things along that sort,
What makes you jest ez hungry yit an' pretty near ez dry
Until you git to workin' on yer piece o' punkin pie?

An' when the basket 's empty an' the cheese an' cake is
done,

An' you can 't help a-wishin' that you had n't yit begun,

Oh, aint it nice to lick yer lips, to scare away a fly,

An' find a lot remainin' from that piece o' punkin pie?

Say, Billy, I 've been thinkin' when I git to be a man,

I 'll have 'bout forty acres jest fer punkins ef I can.

An' may be I 'll git married, but the girl that takes my eye

Must be a bird at bakin' when it comes to punkin pie.

MAKING IT RAIN.

DEAR ZEKIEL: I sit down to-night, an' take my pen in
han',
To tell you 'bout the stock an' crops, an' 'bout Mirandy
Ann.

But first I'll scratch a line er two, fer fear I might fergit,
About our weather, an' the way we've took to makin' it.

A sleek Chicago feller made a lot of us believe
That we wan't gittin' half the rain we're 'titled' to receive.

He had a sort o' fish-pole thet he said he'd shoot aroun',
An' pretty soon the heavens would be pourin' water down.

We needed rain like sixty, fer the corn was pretty dry,
An' I thought, "Well, 't won't hurt nothin', anyhow, to
let him try."

So I talked with Smith an' Billins, an' the other neighbors
round,
An' we 'greed on fifty dollars ef he 'd come an' soak the
ground.

So he fetched his queer contrivance, but he would n't let
us see
How the thing was worked er loaded ; an' he hed a lock
an' key

That he allers kep' on duty, like a pair o' sentinels,
Keepin' guard above a satchel of new-fashioned chemicals.

He got stationed in my barn-loft, an' he made a little hole
In the roof, an' here he stuck out that peculiar piece o'
pole ;

An' he kep' a-shootin' with it somethin' like a half a day,
While we watched fer clouds to gather, an' he spiled a
sight o' hay

With them chemicals o' hisn. But, ez sure ez I am born,
By an' by there come a shower thet jest saved my crop o'
corn.

Did n't rain much fer my neighbors, though it give my
place a soak ;
But it looked to Smith an' Billins like a Yankee weather
joke.

Still they thought they 'd try the feller, so they hed him
come an' stay
Till he 'd brought a shower on them, an' had spiled a lot
o' hay.

Well, the neighbors got excited, jest ez I 'd a done, er
you,
An' that chap hed all the business fer a while thet he
could do.

'Long this spring we thought we 'd git him 'fore there was
too much demand
'Round the State, where they would pay him any price to
soak their land.

So he come the first of April, an' he made it rain aroun',
Till we wanted him to quit it, fer 'twas wet ten inches
down.

“Ef you ’ll raise five hundred dollars I ’ll let up,” he finally
said,

Ez he went on makin’ moisture under foot an’ overhead.

Smith an’ Billins growled a good deal, an’ I said we never
would,

While he chuckled ez he told us he could stan’ it ef we
could.

So we raised the chap his money, an’ I see him on the
train ;

But the weather did n’t know it ; it went on to rain an’
rain,

Till the creeks was overflowin’, an’ the mud was mighty
deep,

An’ the heavens felt so sorry they could only weep an’
weep.

Could n’t git our spring crops planted ; could n’t hardly
git to town ;

Could n’t git the cash we’d wasted ; hed to grin an’ take
it down.

Me an' Smith an' Billins figured on the way the thing
turned out,

An' fer us 't would be lots better ef he 'd never come about.

So we 're goin' to stick to farmin', ez you hev to in the
West,

An' the Lord can run the weather jest about ez He thinks
best.

LITTLE JIM AGIN.

Jest wait a minute, Husband ; tears are things I had n't
planned.

I must n't let Jim see 'em, er he might not understand.

He 's waitin' to be married ; but it aint that moves me so,
It 's pictures of his childhood flockin' back from long ago.

I seem to see him marchin' now the way he used to come,
Across the meaders, poundin' on his little home-made drum.

I see his eyes a-dancin' ez they spy the doughnut dish,
Er lookin' sort o' wistful when they try to tell some wish

Thet 's brimmin' full o' meanin', but is sort o' shy o' words,
Half hopin' mother 'll read it in the music of the birds.

I see him now a-speakin', an' it 's Decoration Day,
An' everybody 's cheerin' him, he 's such a takin' way.

An' now he must be ailin', fer he 's lyin' on a bed :
Oh, yes, don't you remember when he fell an' hurt his head ?

He was n't only seven, an' we did n't think he 'd live,
But still through all his suff'rin' he hed only cheer to give.

I see his kite an' fish-pole, an' his little rake an' hoe ;
A tent of my rag carpet, where he held his Barnum's show.

An' there 's his sled an' wagon, but I won't tell all I see,
Fer you 're a-cryin', Husband, pretty near ez much ez me.

Our heads are gettin' silvered, an' we know the years hev
flown,

But this ain't half so tellin' ez to see that Jim is grown.

An' now we 're at his weddin', an' he 's takin' fer his wife
Ez sweet a girl ez ever went to bless a good man's life.

He 's runnin' of a paper, an' I guess he 's doin' well ;
He talks at public meetin's, an' I 've heard a number tell

That he must run fer Congress: ef he does I know he'll win ;
But still I can't help wishin' he was little Jim agin.

HOW LITTLE NEB MADE PEACE.

'Twas sometime along in the fifties
That Silas an' me was wed,
An' it almost seems like magic
When I think how the years hev sped.

We both was young an' thrifty,
An' our sky was bright and clear,
An' we did n't hev no family jar
For somethin' past a year.

An' when I think it over
It seems so foolish now,
That we let a trifle grow until
It bordered on a row.

But Silas was slow an' easy,
An' sometimes pretty late
A gettin' in to dinner,
An' of course my work must wait.

One day he threw my washin'
An hour or more behind,
An' I would n't hev no explainin'
But give him a piece of my mind.

He happened to hev a good reason
That time fer stayin' out,
But I jest kep' on a-scoldin'
An hour or thereabout.

An' Silas, mad an' huffy,
Called me a contrary shrew ;
I could n't tell jest what he meant,
But 'twas somethin' mean, I knew.

Things did n't look much like improvin'
When we 'd fretted an' fussed fer a week,
An' I was too cross to talk reason,
An' Silas too surly to speak.

Neither one would give in or speak civil —
I reckon we both was too proud —
Till the Lord quickly shut off our sunshine
By sendin' an awful black cloud.

Our dear little Nebuchadnezer,
Our baby with eyes like the sky,
One mornin' grew sick, an' by evenin'
The doctor was sure he must die.

Both Silas an' me was distracted,
Fer he was our treasure an' pride,
An' home would be awfully lonesome
When dear little Nebby had died.

But yet in the face of our sorrow
That beast showed its hideous life,
That bitter and proud-headed quarrel,
That peace-breakin', home-wreckin' strife.

An' while we watched baby together
Each hoped, feared an' wrestled alone;
An' heaven seemed a big brass inclosure,
An' earth a cold, comfortless stone.

If we could jest sorrow together,
It would bring such a flood of relief;
But neither knew how to get at it,
So we sat each alone in our grief.

An' so baby kep' growin' weaker
An' Silas an' me staid apart,
Till the angels come down an' took Nebby
Where strife never troubles the heart.

Dear Silas! that blow was so heavy!
He broke down when Nebby was dead,
An' sat in his arm-chair a-moanin',
With his hands up a-holdin' his head.

I went an' sat down close beside him,
He knew what I wanted to say
But could n't, an' so he jest answered,
In a broken an' choked sort of way:

“Dear Beckie, fergive me for stayin'—”
An' my voice was so husky an' weak,
That I could n't answer him neither,
Except with a kiss on his cheek.

Tho' neither one had proposed it,
We somehow both on us rose,
An' went where dear Nebby was lyin'
Asleep in his last long repose.

We knelt by the cradle together,
Our tears were abundant an' free,
An' Silas was sobbin' an' prayin':
"O Lord, fergive Beckie an' me.

"We 've both ben to blame fer this trouble,
We 've both held our notions too high;
But, Lord, when we fussed an' disputed
We did n't know Nebby would die.

"We orton to ben so onyieldin';
This awful affliction 's desarved,
But may we forever hereafter
From quarrels an' sich be presarved."

Then Silas an' me kissed each other,
An' the edge was removed from our grief,
An' with our great burden of sorrow
There came a great sense of relief.

An' never since then hev we quarreled,
But each one has earnestly tried
To do as we promised each other
The day that our dear Nebby died.

An' so we 've been livin' an' learnin',
An' somehow we 've both come to think
That God took our baby to save us
From eternally breakin' love's link.

An' while the swift years hev been passin',
New faces hev now and then come,
To give us their Babyland sunshine,
An' prattle all gloom from our home.

An' Silas an' me hev been thinkin'
How many a family has had
A quarrelin' father an' mother
An' children jest built fer the bad;

How we might hev kep' on disputin',
An' hed a tumultuous home,
From which all our peace-lovin' children
Would early be wantin' to roam.

But *our* house has been full of sunshine,
Our children are turnin' out well,
An' them that 's away come real often
To visit the old folks a spell.

So Silas an' me hev decided
That the one whose earth toil shall first cease,
Will tell little Neb up in heaven
That he turned our dissension to peace.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



THAT NEW BOY.

Well, John, your telegram 's received,
A brimming draught of joy.
The news can hardly be believed,
That you have got a boy.

It seems but yesterday, indeed,
You sat in Mother's lap,
Or rode a prancing broomstick steed,
A white-haired little chap.

I can't forget the load of great
Responsibility
With which, two years your senior, Fate
Had seemed to burden me.

Nor be unmindful that wherein
 Lay my authority,
And right to practice discipline,
 Was more than you could see.

But did n't we have worlds of fun,
 Those watermelon days,
When life for us had just begun,
 And new were all its ways?

How good green apples tasted then —
 Until we went to bed,
And heard from that same fruit again,
 And wished that we were dead!

And Saturdays, when out of school,
 What more could youngsters wish,
Than hook and line and limpid pool
 And half a day to fish?

And if, perchance, we caught a few —
A dozen, say, or so —
None longer than an inch or two,
How proudly home we 'd go !

How 'mother loved to cook those fish !
How good they always were !
How appetizing every dish
Prepared for us by her !

Do you recall that after school
One day when wells were dry,
You rode Old Jack, our pious mule,
To try the creek near by ?

His thirst more quickly to appease,
Or saintlier to seem,
He dropped devoutly on his knees,
And dumped you in the stream.

I even have to laugh to-day,
At how your vengeance, cruel,
Portrayed the fierce and ghastly way
You planned to kill that mule!

But by-and-by your wrath was stilled
With dry attire for wet,
And if Old Jack has not been killed
I s'pose he's living yet.

And now the scroll of memory brings,
From out that golden past,
Bright days which flew on eagles' wings,
And joys too deep to last.

And just to think a boy has come,
A sort of known surprise,
To make headquarters at your home—
It's hard to realize.

But if the little chap survives,
Before he reaches six
Just note how deftly he contrives
To play his father's tricks.

If, like his father, he attain
The ideal six-foot plan,
May he, like him, in heart and brain
Be every inch a man.

A PICTURE OF LIFE.

The sea was raging; near the rocks a ship was going down,
While helpless groups stood watching from a little fishing
town.

A man was in the rigging, they could hear his plaintive
cry,

But no one dared to venture out with such a sea and sky.

“Poor fellow!” “It’s too bad!” “Too bad!” was heard on
every hand,

Till some one cried “Quick, bring a boat! I’ll fetch the
man to land!”

A fearless youth had spoken, one of stalwart heart and
arm,

Who knew the sea and knew his strength, but did not
know alarm.

“Don’t go!” a chorus shouted; “it is certain death to try.”
“Not *certain*,” smiled the hero, and he turned to say
“Good-by”

To one, a gray-haired woman, who entreated with the plea
That for her widowed sake he’d not go out on such a sea.

“Oh, Jimmy, you are all I have; your father’s crew were
drowned,

Your brother George’s ship went down and he was never
found;

And now don’t make me give you up; I’ve *you*, but nothing
more.”

“There, mother don’t be worried; God will help me back
to shore.

“Pray, mother, while I’m rowing; can’t you hear that poor
man’s cry?

You’d think your boy a coward if I stood and watched
him die.”

A tear, a kiss, the boy sets out—he battles as he starts;
A hundred prayers are rising from a hundred anxious
hearts.

The village mayor, watching, cries "I guess the lad 's gone
down ;

No, there he comes, and right side up ; he 's too good stuff
to drown.

Ah ! hold ; his boat 's capsizing — no ! he 's righted her ;
she'll float !

He throws a rope — there — look, the man is safely in the
boat."

The mother's heart beats wildly, and her prayer can only
be,

"O God, my George has perished ; bring my Jimmy back
to me."

The mayor cried, "They 're hugging — must be crazy stop-
ping there" ;

A shout is heard that rings above the tempest in the air.

Four stalwart arms instead of two through walls of billow
forge,

Till near enough, then Jimmy shouts, "Oh, Mother, it is
George !"

The twain are safely landed — the heroic deed is done ;
The mother, to her bosom, clasps two sons instead of one.

The boy who braved the billows, dared the ocean's raging
 track,
Went out to save a stranger, but he brought a brother
 back.

Oh, picture of life's drama : some are sailing o'er the main,
And some are safely landed, where the storm fiends rage
 in vain ;

Some struggling 'mid the breakers, going down in sight of
 land,
With now and then a hero holding out a helping hand.
But know, O fearful boatman, if you fling alarms to air
And reach yon sinking stranger, you will find a brother
 there.

"WOOLLY BILL."

Do you remember, Mary, fifty years ago to-day,
How back in Massachusetts we were packed to come away?

And how our friends surprised us just before we made the
start,

And loaded us with tokens of their kindliness of heart?

Both born and raised among them, we had known them all
for years:

What wonder, then, on parting, that a few regretful tears

Defied your best endeavors and my strongest wall of pride,
Inquisitively asking what was going on outside.

How Deacon Williams told us we were foolish not to stay
When several gilt-edged pulpits had their offers turned
our way.

But duty pointed plainly, and those calls we did n't heed,
But set our faces westward where the call was just the
 need.

How large we found the prairies, how the sportive zephyrs
 played
Around that little lodging where the first four weeks we
 stayed !

Do you recall the morning when we heard a trampling
 sound,
As though a hundred armies on the plains were marching
 round ?

The cause was soon apparent, when a cloud of dust, you
 know,
Swept past us, half concealing scores of maddened buffalo.

And after, with a warning of its dread approach, there
 came
A wing of Nature's army, an immense stampede of flame.

We could n't fly before it, we were squarely in its track ;
But hurried counter-fires kept its awful ravage back.

How biting cold that morning when the Indians came down
And made a winter sally on our unsuspecting town.

They had some ground for grievance, and like bees from
troubled hives,
They swarmed and sacked and pillaged, scarcely leaving
us our lives.

The church, just half completed, we had worked so hard
to build,
Was left a heap of ashes when their cup of wrath was filled.

Of every hope and comfort we were seemingly bereft,
Until you said : " Dear Husband, all the promises are left."

And so we stayed and labored, and in time rebuilt the
church,
And had that great revival, when so many came to search

The treasures of the kingdom. Oh, 't was worth the hard-
ships, Wife,
To see a hundred converts finding peace, and joy, and life.

Then all the other places where we first proclaimed the
Word
With waves of Gospel power in those early times were
stirred.

I often think of Wild Cliff. How inapt I tho't that name,
With everything about the town so spiritless and tame,

Until one Sunday morning I rode over there to preach,
And found a dozen cowboys, with two large revolvers
each.

The leader of the party, fitly christened "Woolly Bill,"
A wreck of splendid manhood which betrayed some vestige
still,

Came round before the service in a friendly kind of way,
And told me he was running everything in town that day.

“Now, Parson,” said the fellow, “jest light in an’ do yer
best,
An’ give us fire an’ brimstone, an’ remember you’re out
West.”

’T was rather sudden notice, not ten minutes to prepare,
But I was always loaded in those early days for bear.

How strange the situation: half confederate with Bill,
To stand and show the ruin of his course if followed still.

And if I touched some subject less with retribution vexed,
Bill called me from my rovings with, “Stick, Parson, to
yer text.”

He would n’t let me swerve an inch, until I chanced to say
That mother loves her wayward son, no matter where
he stray.

That magic word of “mother” seemed to throw a misty
vail
Before the plainsman’s vision, and I saw I had the trail.

I pictured home and childhood, mother's loving, tender
care,
The morning kiss of welcome, evening's "Now I lay me"
prayer.

Some subtle power led me to portray a scene of death,
A boy whose heart was breaking at a mother's waning
breath.

Her earnest admonitions, and the last words, feebly given,
"My darling Willie, promise that you'll meet me up in
Heaven."

The tears for several minutes had been trickling down
Bill's cheek,
And now the sobbing fellow rose, and, turning, tried to
speak.

I never saw contrition till that burly ranger stood,
His very grief confessing more than language ever could.

His comrades were astounded ; they had known the man
for years,
But none had once suspected he was capable of tears.

But even now he swayed them, for the power of his grief
But showed them that their leader had been born indeed a
chief.

.
And when our friends this evening with their gifts sur-
prised us so,
My tho'ts were strangely mingled with those scenes of long
ago.

And Deacon Grey was present, dear old faithful William
Grey,
Whose hoary locks remind us that he has n't long to stay.

How beautiful his language in presenting us these chairs,
His picture of the climbers nearly through their toilsome
stairs !

The dear old man has finished now his fourscore steps and
eight ;
I almost hear him knocking at the threshold of the Gate.

And when we 're all admitted, what a joy we 'll find it still
To know this king in Glory once was known as "Woolly
Bill" !

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM.

I had a dream within a dream ;
 I dreamed that I was dreaming,
As mellow light the queen of night
 Across my room was streaming.

I dreamed that where the harvest fair
 Invited harvest sabres,
I swung my blade, until the shade
 Allured me from my labors.

Among the trees a gentle breeze
 Set all the leaves a-flutter ;
While sweet-voiced birds poured forth the words
 The zephyrs tried to utter.

With every thought of toil forgot,
Unconsciousness soon found me ;
Fantastic things on dreamy wings
Seemed floating all around me.

I cannot tell what subtle spell
Effected thus my capture ;
But sorrow, pain, and all their train
Were gone ; and all seemed rapture.

And thus, at last, the day was past ;
But when the spell unbound me,
Lo ! at my side, from far and wide,
The reapers stood around me.

The Master came and called each name ;
Each man in turn replying
How long he 'd wrought, what sheaves he 'd
brought,
How hard the day, or trying.

In deepest shame I heard my name ;
I crimsoned fast and faster ;
I felt disgrace writ on my face,
And thus addressed the Master :

“Good Master, be not wroth with me,
Nor too severely blame me ;
By heat oppressed I stopped to rest,
When slumber overcame me.

“Thus lying here, sleep’s prisoner,
The precious time slipped by me ;
But I ’ll redeem these hours which seem
Thus lost, if you ’ll but try me.”

Though kindly sad, his answer had
A tone remorse-demanding :
“Yon coming rain will spoil the grain
Which you to-day leave standing.”

Just as he spoke I really woke,
 Rejoiced to find, though weeping,
No wasting grain, no threat'ning rain ;
 I 'd only dreamed of sleeping.

And more and more I 've pondered o'er
 This strange, impressive vision,
And tried to glean what it might mean,
 Till this is my decision :

The world the field, and souls the yield ;
 The Christian church the reapers ;
The ones who play life's hours away,
 The shade-enchanted sleepers.

The evening scene I take to mean
 That there is surely coming
A day when we shall clearly see
 Of life the total summing.

Though many stand with empty hand,
Life's harvest-time all slumbered,
I know that some well-sheaved will come :
May I with these be numbered.

KANSAS.*

"Four hundred miles long, eight thousand miles deep, and reaches to the stars."—JOHN A. ANDERSON.

'Tis not her cribs of yellow corn,
Her bursting bins of golden wheat,
Her meadows gemmed at break of morn,
Her prairies buttercupped and sweet ;

Her pastures spotted o'er with kine,
Her knolls and ridges white with sheep,
Her favored spots where shaft and mine
Bid boundless treasure wake from sleep.

'Tis not in what we trade for gold,
In things appraised by bulk or weight,
Not in the purchased or the sold,
Thy lasting glory lies, O State.

*Read before the State Convention of Young Men's Christian Associations, at Lawrence, Kas., October 30, 1892.

Thou hast a history engraved
 Upon the pyramids of time ;
The prophet sees thy future, paved
 Perhaps with thorns, yet still sublime.

The brave, the true, the wise, the good,
 Inspired by thee have made their stand ;
Their manhood and their womanhood
 In turn have made thy record grand.

Young men of Kansas, let there be
 No faltering where those heroes trod,
Though freed from rum and slavery
 This land must still be won for God.

Be firm, courageous, valiant, true,
 Let others falter if they must.
The State expectant looks to you ;
 Be faithful to her sacred trust.

Where siren snares are laid for youth,
Where blackest sin wears brightest gloss,
Unmask deception, herald truth,
Unfurl the banner of the cross.

Go home and let the whole world feel
That Kansas is ablaze again ;
Young men of wisdom, tact and zeal
Are marching forth to save young men.

THE COWBOY POET.

Sharp-Shooter Jim, a cowboy, roamed the wild, romantic
West,

Ranked in his rough profession as among the very best ;
Yet through his reckless nature ran a strange, poetic
strain,

Which turned his thoughts to rhythm as he galloped
o'er the plain.

In all the western authors he was more or less well
read ;

And his "divine afflatus" by this fuel had been fed
Until he took the lyre and began, himself, to write ;
Though all his maiden efforts were most strictly "out of
sight."

But, when at last discovered, he was forced to own their
coin,

To grant their presentation, and, in fact, himself to join
In reading from the poems he was bold enough to write ;

For Jim was somewhat noted for his power to recite.
He loved to speak from Riley, Field, Sam Foss, or
Eugene Ware,
Or give Nye's autumn poem on the atmosphere and air.
And now his new departure made it everywhere the talk
That his talents were not bounded by the range assigned
to stock.
One plainsman said but little, save to give the modest
hint
That Jim would be gray-headed when he saw his rhymes
in print.
This nettled his admirers, and they urged him to submit
His verses to some paper; they were sure to make a hit.
A little town was starting, off some twenty miles or
more,
Which had a one-horse weekly, run above a one-horse
store.
The editor, one morning at his desk — a dry goods
box —
Sat sorting squibs of humor to be headed "Sand and
Rocks,"

When in there came a cowboy, looking diffident and
shy,

As though almost persuaded that he 'd better turn and
fly.

"Good morning," said the editor with business in his
tones ;

"You wish a year's subscription to The Weekly Skull
and Bones?"

"Not that exactly," Jim replied, his cheek a crimson
tint ;

"I 've got some verses here that I would like fer you to
print."

"We seldom publish poems, and besides, sir, if we should,
We 'd choose from standard authors who are recognized
as good ;

But, if you 'll leave your copy here, and call next week
again,

I 'll probably find time to pass my judgment on it then."
From underneath his pistol belt Jim drew a crumpled
sheet,

With four unmated stanzas set to fitful rhymes and feet.

The editor reviewed them with a chafed, impatient
glance,

Which prophesied their failure and rejection in advance.

“Don’t think they ’ll answer,” said this rash Apollo of
the pen.

“Why not ?” said Jim. “Because, sir, they ’re not poetry;
and then

We ’re after news, not verses. Kindly call again ; good
day.”

The man was plainly verdant in the common western
way.

A cowboy’s wrath is symbolled by a blast of dynamite,
And if it warns explosion you are safest out of sight.

Jim’s shyness changed to anger, and his look was fierce
and grim ;

No lily-fingered dude should make a laughing-stock of
him.

He took his slighted copy, trembling with the rage he
felt,

And drew a seven-shooter from his heavy pistol belt.

He cocked the weapon, aimed it at the other fair and
square.

“Now say that this aint poetry,” he shouted, “if you dare!”

“Don’t shoot! We’ll print the verses!” in affright the critic cried.

“But are they poetry?” said Jim. The editor replied:

“You bet they are; they’re forcible, impressive, and indeed

I think, sir, we shall find them just exactly what we need.”

And then, for pistol practice, and to test his faultless shot,

Jim sent a score of bullets through the ceiling in one spot.

The printers took the copy, and within an hour’s time
They had the proof corrected on that bit of ranger rhyme.

Jim’s lines appeared next morning, and behold! above his name,

A glowing introduction to the starry fields of fame.

Some larger paper saw it, and inquired if now and then
They might receive a poem from his bright and breezy pen

To-day he might be numbered with the rhymers of
renown

Had not a jealous rival deemed it best to shoot him
down.

But his example lingers, and the way his course begun
Leaves room for vast conjecture as to what he might
have done.

In life's uncertain contest brass helps many men ahead ;
But when it comes to poets nothing takes the place of
lead.

THE RESUBMISSIONIST'S STORY.

I took the western fever in the fall of eighty-two,
And thought I 'd try my fortune in a State where all
was new.

A taste of Kansas zephyrs toned my lagging appetite,
And gave me zest for labor and delightful sleep at night.
I took a good pre-emption, built a cozy little home,
Enjoyed the furrowed richness of the black and virgin
loam,

Imbided the Kansas spirit in the enterprising air,
And felt the sense of progress in the people everywhere.
I loved the cheerful sunshine and the laughter of the
storm,

And always stood by Kansas, bright or cloudy, cold or
warm.

I thought her almost perfect, save for one gigantic flaw—
Her legislative blunder of a prohibition law.

The anti-license action, which the State had just begun,
I believed was suicidal, and must be at once undone.
I never lost occasion to announce my party plank,
And I must have come to be a sort of resubmission
crank.

I seldom took a drink myself, but thought the temper-
ance cause
Ought to stick to moral suasion, and not tamper with
the laws ;
And I fought this hated statute in so vigorous a way,
I was thoroughly disgusted when I found it there to
stay.

I had a boy named Willie, and a smarter little chap
Never nestled for a story in a father's evening lap.
He had a way of saying things we did n't think he knew,
And everything I talked about he had to talk of, too ;
My hobby-horse he learned to ride, and preached my
"Kansas cure"—

Ardent little resubmissionist, myself in miniature ;
And when, a little older, he began to go to school,
He thought that every temperance man was nothing
but a fool.

Our district lyceum one fall arranged a big debate
Upon the mooted question of restriction by the State.
Willie, drilled beforehand, made a speech — a little chap
of ten —

On anti-prohibition, and out-argued half the men.
His side came out victorious, and everybody said
'T was the logic of his speech that brought the "antis"
out ahead.

They cheered the little fellow, and one man came 'round
to say,

"My boy, you'll make a Webster or a Robert Hayne
some day."

And as the boy grew older, sharp though winsome,
strong though slim,

My wife and I were coming to be "just wrapped up in
him."

I had a chance one day to trade, by paying something
down,

For a thriving line of business in a live Missouri town.
The place was strong high license, and its ten saloons
or more

A very large percentage of the town's expenses bore.

I told my Kansas neighbors, when I went to move away,
That I had found a decent place, and there I meant to
stay.

And I half believed my influence, in going from the
State,

Would destine prohibition to a sad and early fate.

All went smoothly in Missouri, and *my town* I thought
was reached,

Till I found my boy was learning how to practice what
I preached ;

For something strong he seemed to have an inborn ap-
petite,

And he early formed the habit of carousing late at night.
For weeks I would n't hear it, that he'd really learned
to drink,

And when 't was forced upon me I was puzzled what to
think,

And still more puzzled what to say, for I had fought
for rum,

Never thinking its invasions would be turned upon my
home.

Of course I ceased my tirade on our sister temperance
State,
But that did n't help the matter, for my silence came too
late ;
And when one night he staggered home almost too
drunk to walk,
I began to reap the harvest of my resubmission talk ;
And late next morning, when with nervous step he came
down stairs,
I tried to show the pitfalls where drink hides his wily
snares.
My words, I thought, were telling on the boy's repent-
ant heart,
But soon he undeceived me by assuming just the part
That I had often taken, for he used my arguments
To build about his action an impregnable defense :
" We have to have saloons," said he, " to make a lively
town,
And if they 're not supported they will very soon go
down."
He 'd said enough ; I had to stop ; of course he had his
way,

While I must watch in silence his advancing doom each
day.

His mother tried to stop him, but in vain her prayers
and tears—

He had too much momentum from his early childhood
years;

And he sunk so fast his ruin was an awful thing to
watch,

For soon he came to revel almost nightly in debauch.

'T was always well toward morning when he'd quit his
haunts of sin,

But his mother never slumbered till her boy was safely in.

And so it went until he did n't come one stormy night,

Though his mother kept her vigils till the east was gray
with light.

And then she saw a little group of boys approach our
gate,

Whose slow and labored footsteps told they bore some
heavy weight.

She summoned me to meet them—this sad, silent,
mournful band—

For terrors smote her bosom as the breakers lash a
strand.

The burden-bearers entered with a hushed and muffled
tread,
And on the bier they carried lay our Willie, cold and
dead.
One glance ! one moan ! — his mother swooned upon his
lifeless breast ;
And I was changed to marble ! — I can scarce recall the
rest,
Except a baby's cradle which was rocking to and fro,
And Willie cooing in it, as he had long years ago ;
And hazy scenes of childhood, roguish mischief, boyish
glee,
A little living copy patterned always after me.
And then the madness vanished, and my reeling brain
was stilled ;
And there my child was lying, by my own false teach-
ing killed.
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Well, now that he has left us, and his blighted life is
o'er,
The place we used to call our home is not *home* any
more ;

A dread remorse will haunt it, which I cannot make
depart,
And my wife is slowly dying of a mother's broken heart ;
And day and night 't is Willie, though we seldom speak
his name,
But our very silence shows us that we think and feel
the same.
In dreams I often see him as a little boy again,
Or grown, perhaps, to manhood, swaying crowds of
listening men.
And with the happy vision hope and joy return once
more,
Till wakefulness engulfs me in the grief I had before.

Believe me : when you hear a man disparaging all laws
The end of which is triumph for the glorious temperance
cause ;
Opposed to prohibition, bound its object to destroy ;
Placing gold at higher value than the safety of his boy ;
One who really fights for whisky, I care not who he is —
I tell you what, he 'll change his mind if the boy it kills
is his.

MASSA'S CONVERSION.

Down in Southern Carolina,
Just before the civil strife,
I was on a short vacation
From my busy northern life.

Having a delightful visit
With my Uncle, William Ore,
Who was then a wealthy planter,
With a hundred slaves or more.

Back some distance from his mansion
Several negro cabins stood,
Near a stream which half encircled
In its course a neighboring wood.

Here the colored people gathered
To exhort and sing and pray,
When, with intermittent candle,
Lit the fly his night-bound way.

Night had fallen down one evening,
As we chatted on the porch,
When I saw the grove was lighted
With some curious kind of torch.

And its dim, uncertain flicker
Showed an audience was there ;
And I thought I saw one negro
In the attitude of prayer.

When he closed we heard them singing
Some plantation Gospel song.
One arose and lined the verses
Which the rest sang clear and strong.

I, of course, was unaccustomed
To such music, sung so slow ;
And their singing brought to memory
Boyhood songs of long ago.

Uncle Will and I approached them,
Finding safe seclusion near,
Where the whole of their proceedings
We could both observe and hear.

In the testimony meeting
Many odd remarks were made ;
Still each member seemed in earnest
As he talked or sang or prayed.

It was hard, as may be fancied,
When they told their joys and fears,
To refrain at times from laughter,
Then to check unbidden tears.

First the old gray-headed leader
Spoke of Heaven's promised bliss,
And he brought his exhortation
To a close about like this :

“In dis big Salvation co'nfield
I is almost done my row ;
I can see de end out yonder,
Jes' a few mo' hills to hoe.

“Den de Lawd is gwine to take me
Wha' my fambly's gone befo',
And I 'll meet my wife and chillun
On de bright and golden sho'.

“All day long dis ole man 's singin'
All de songs he lub de bes',
But sometimes a cloud ob sadness
Hides de sun ob righteousness,

“’Kase you know dat good ole massa
 Neber gib de Lawd his haht,
And I’s ’fraid dat in de jedgment
 God will say to him ‘Depaht.’

“He has got among de angels
 Many fren’s beside his boy;
Ef he’d come to Christ dey’d all turn
 Hebben up-side-down wid joy.

“Ef I knew dat up in Glory
 I should meet him dar some day,
I should like to go dis eb’nin’.
 Brudder Rasmus, will you pray?”

Then a tall, ungainly negro,
 With a head of bushy hair,
Rose and gave, in plaintive accent,
 This unstudied, childlike prayer:

“Lawd, why is it dat we niggers
Is so chuck full ob dy love,
When our good, kin’-hahted massa
Ain’t no hope in Hebben above?

“Lawd, I done gone lubs my massa,
An’ I wish dat he lubbed you;
But ef he don’ git to Hebben
Den I want to miss it, too.

“Now den, Lawd, turn loose yo’ spirit;
Come wid all yo’ power and might;
Melt ole massa’s haht dis eb’nin’;
Fill his soul wid peace and light;

“Den when Gabriel blow his trumpet—
Loud as eber Gabriel ken,
Whedder we be dead or libben,
We’ll all meet in Hebben. Amen.”

Wrapped so close was my attention
By the speaker's awkward grace,
That, till now, I had not noticed
Any change in Uncle's face.

He was plainly much affected,
For his handsome manly form
Trembled with suppressed emotion,
As a leaf resists the storm.

Well, the meeting still continued,
We remaining out of sight;
Many prayed that "massa's pathway"
Might be "lit wid Hebben's light."

They were singing "Come to Jesus,
He yo' po' lost soul will save,"
When my uncle went up forward,
With a look disturbed but grave.

Took a seat beside the leader ;
 Bowed in reverence his head ;
Waited till the song was finished ;
 Then in trembling accent said :

“Many, many years God’s spirit
 Has been striving with my heart ;
But my love for fame and riches
 Has compelled Him to depart.

“But to-night I ’m very anxious
 To begin the Christian life.
In my weakness may God help me
 To be victor in the strife.

“Pray the Lord to make me constant
 In my labors to the end,
For whatever time is left me
 In His service I must spend !”

Silence reigned for just a moment
After Uncle closed, and then
“Bress de Lawd ! ” exclaimed the leader,
And the others cried “Amen.”

Then ensued such demonstrations
As display true negro soul :
Laughing, singing, crying, shouting,
Their delight was past control.

This continued for a season,
Till at length the leader said :
“As we thank our Hebbenly Father,
Let each memba’ bow his head.”

With the prayer the service ended,
Each attendant went his way ;
At the house we found them wondering
What had caused our long delay.

Uncle gave full explanations,
And his eyes were filled with tears
As he said : "At last I 've started
Though I 've waited many years."

Something over one year later,
True to what he thought was right,
Uncle joined the Southern Army
And was killed in his first fight.

But I 'm sure that old class-leader,
And the ones who led in prayer,
When they reached the heavenly city
Found "Ole Massa" waiting there.

SUNRISE.

And now begins, with nature-wak'ning ray,
The universal autocrat of day,
 With all-observant eye
 His journey through the sky,
To see that all preserves its wonted way,

And ere we see his many-colored train
Sweep grandly down behind the Western plain,
 The joyous nuptial bell
 And funereal knell
Will publish earth's intensest bliss and pain.

As far as eye can see on every hand,
In billowy folds of undulating land,
 With nodding crests of green
 An ocean vast is seen,
For which the distant sky provides a strand.

From all the plain an anthem seems to swell,
Continually re-echoed from the dell ;
 The early-risen swain
 Is jocund at the strain
Which joins the chorus from the breakfast bell.

From Nature's bounty now a share to ask,
The plowman takes again his humble task,
 To turn the fallow plot ;
 Nor murmurs at his lot,
Because it wears not wealth's delusive mask.

The herd-boy whistles to his faithful dog
Ere yet the vale has parted with its fog ;
 And down the beaten lane
 Proceeds a solemn train
Intent to pasture by the neighboring bog.

With lofty head and self-important air,
And all the pomp the honored often bear,
 One grazer, in her pride,
 Assumes the role of guide,
Because, forsooth, the bell she haps to wear.

Now borne across the intervening plain
Is heard the rumble of a distant train ;
 Gigantic slave of man,
 Swift commerce caravan,
With highway touching Mexico and Maine.

What means that group of massive brick and stone
Which stands in solemn grandeur, vast and lone ?
 Oh, mournful to repeat,
 Yon castle gives retreat
To him whose reason abdicates her throne.

Now let the roving eye a moment rest
Where Washburn stands, in crimson glory drest —
 The rendezvous of youth,
 The garner-house of truth,
The young and rising Athens of the West.

Where roof and chimney indistinctly rise
And spire and turret struggle toward the skies,
 A city greets the sight,
 Whose shafts of laughing light,
Reflected from the east, entrance our eyes.

How manifold and motley the array
Of heart excises levied there to-day!

How boundless is the scope!

How keen despair and hope,
When through a city's throbbing pulse they play.

Above, beneath, before us and behind,
All Nature's myriad tongues are unconfined.

Each has a different song,

And yet the medley throng
Defy us one discordant note to find.

And now the heart, with ecstasy spellbound,
Believes no scene more charming can be found

In all the wide domain

Of Kansas glade and plain,

Than daybreak viewed in June from Burnett's
Mound.

Lt
Omn

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